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ABSTRACT

This study illustrates how the concept of "direct involvement" on the part of the accrediting agency can improve the quality of higher education. "Direct involvement" is defined as action by a representative of an educational agency that resulted in some observable improvement in educational quality. Categories and examples of direct assistance are identified and described. Five case studies are presented which document actions by three regional instutitional agencies and two specialized agencies that provided enhancement of educational quality: (1) The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and S.D. Bishop State Junior College, Mobile, Alabama; (2) The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey; (3) The Western Association of Schools and Colleges and Long Beach Community College, California; (4) The Association of Theological Schools Institute for Theological Education Management and the Washington Theological Union, Silver Spring, Maryland; and (5) The American Psychological Association Consultation Program and the Counseling Internship Program at Towson State University, Maryland. (JD)

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THE ROLE OF ACCREDITATION IN DIRECTLY IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

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The Council on Postsecondary Accreditation
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INTRODUCTION

Nongovernmental accreditation is one of the major mechanisms through which America's postsecondary education community acts to verify and improve educational quality. Millard (1983) has provided a comprehensive overview of the accreditation process and some of its benefits. As a motivator and mechanism for institutional and programmatic self-study and change, accreditation has long been recognized as a valuable part of the nation's postsecondary education system (e.g., Simmons, 1984; Diamond, 1982; Healey, 1980; Warren, 1980; Warren & Anderson, 1979; Warner, 1978). But accreditation is more than a passive process for promoting self-improvement. O'Neill and Heaney (1982) are among those who have urged accreditation agencies to involve themselves *directly* in carrying out educational improvement efforts. Unfortunately, there is very little evidence of the successful pursuit of improvement efforts. If direct accreditation agency involvement could be documented, it might suggest ways in which accreditation could become an even stronger force in the burgeoning efforts to promote excellence throughout American education. This study was undertaken to provide such documentation.

Shortly after the study began, its need became even more apparent. Several major national studies of the status of higher education, including those of the National Institute of Education and the Association of American Colleges, virtually ignored accreditation in their calls for improvements in college governance, curricula, and accountability. Rather than being singled out for criticism by the authors of these reports, accreditation suffered the worse fate of being simply overlooked as a relevant factor. Few of the participants in the national policy debates on educational excellence seemed to be aware of either the track record or the potential of accreditation. Thus, it became a secondary purpose of this study to suggest ways in which accreditation might become a participant in future national policies aimed at enhancing the quality of higher education.

Some words of explanation are needed here to clarify the concept of "direct involvement" that was used in the study. Direct involvement was defined as action by a representative of an accreditation agency (e.g., a member of the professional staff or a site visitor) that resulted in some observable improvement in educational quality. Direct involvement may thus be thought of as action "above and beyond the normal call of duty," i.e., beyond that called for by the typical accreditation role of motivating and directing institutional or programmatic self-study and self-improvement.

METHODS

Two separate methods of inquiry were used to gather data on accreditation's direct role in enhancing educational quality. The first method involved collecting "critical incidents" from knowledgeable observers of higher education. Through articles in the COPA newsletter, personal letters to the directors of all COPA-recognized accreditation agencies, and personal contacts, the author requested information about cases where the observer felt that direct assistance by an accreditation agency (e.g., by agency staff, commission members, site visit team members, consultants, or other representatives) was especially helpful in improving the quality of an educational program or institution. For each case, the observer was requested to report information about the type of institution/program involved, what the agency representative did, what resulted, and why the observer felt the outcome constituted an improvement in educational quality. All obtained incident reports were written down in a standard format for later analysis.

Based on initial analyses of the obtained incidents and on nominations from those who contributed incidents, several particularly notable examples were nominated for more extensive attention. The nominees were balanced to ensure representation of different types of accreditation agencies and institutions. Five examples were then selected, to which the author made a site visit. During these visits, all major parties involved in the incident were interviewed and relevant documents were reviewed. The resulting case studies of these five examples constituted the second method of inquiry used in this study.

RESULTS

Critical Incidents

Approximately 150 critical incidents were obtained over a six-month period beginning in September 1984 and ending in March 1985. About a third of the incidents were derived from the actions of institutional accreditation agencies (mostly regional associations), with the remainder stemming from specialized agencies. The incidents revealed much about the scope and diversity of direct actions by the people who constitute the core of accreditation. Appendix A provides examples drawn from the received incidents, arranged according to the following major classifications:

1. Provision of specific preaccreditation assistance by staff or representatives of agencies.
2. Assistance with targeted self-studies (after initial accreditation) to help meet specific institutional/program needs.
3. Assistance by members of accreditation site visit teams to or on behalf of visited institutions or programs, involving improvements in facilities, equipment, instruction, and curricula.
4. Assistance by staff of visited institutions or programs to members of accreditation site visit teams.
5. Provision of specific postaccreditation assistance, involving improvements in governance, fiscal stability, faculty qualifications, curricula, and instruction.
6. Facilitation of general professional and institutional development among member institutions and programs.

Obtained incidents provided examples ranging in magnitude from simple suggestions that resulted in modest improvements in a single program on a single campus to major undertakings that affected entire state

systems of higher education. Most notable among the incidents were examples where accreditation agencies had actively sought to identify and respond to common needs of their member institutions/programs, sometimes using funds obtained from external sources.

Case Studies

The five case studies documented actions by three regional institutional agencies and two specialized agencies, as follows:

1. With financial support from the Carnegie and later the Ford foundations, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools senior college commission has for over 15 years provided a program of special assistance to Historically Black Colleges in its region. The first study documents the assistance provided to S.D. Bishop State Junior College in Mobile, Alabama.

2. Staff of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools higher education commission made a major effort to follow up on an adverse site visit report at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. The second study documents the remarkable results.

3. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges junior college commission, working with the governing boards for community colleges in California and Hawaii, won a FIPSE grant to institute major improvements in the planning and evaluation capabilities of their constituents. The third study documents the development of an accreditation-based strategic planning system at Long Beach Community College, Long Beach, California.

4. The Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada diagnosed a major problem that was troubling the administrators of many of its member institutions — lack of management expertise. In response, with support from the Lilly Endowment, the association has for five years offered a summer institute in theological school management. The fourth study documents the beneficial involvement of the Washington Theological Union in Silver Spring, Maryland, in the institute.

5. The American Psychological Association routinely provides a preaccreditation consultation service for programs considering APA accreditation. The last study documents the experiences of the Counseling Psychology internship program at Towson State University, Towson, Maryland, with the APA service.

Appendix B to this report contains the five case studies.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several common elements run through the findings of this study. Foremost is the confirmation that accreditation agencies can be a source of exceptionally useful assistance, often at little or no cost to member institutions/programs. What seems to be required is a willingness on the part of an individual or small group of individuals within the agency to become actively involved in meeting a perceived need — going beyond the bounds provided by the traditional accreditation model and mobilizing new resources, developing new models, or taking the extra steps necessary to ensure that self-improvement efforts succeed. This study was not intended to provide any indication of the frequency of such actions; but whatever the present frequency, more can be accomplished.

Members of the postsecondary education community need to be made more fully aware of the kinds of benefits that can accrue through active involvement by accreditation agencies and their representatives. And those who also happen to be members of the accreditation community need to redouble their efforts to promote active involvement. As an initial step, four things can be done now by COPA:

1. The examples and models produced by this research should be widely distributed both within and outside the COPA membership.

2. Future COPA professional development efforts should focus on techniques of constituent needs assessment aimed at identifying areas where member institutions or programs might benefit from agency-initiated or agency-managed actions.

3. All accreditation agency staff members should be alert to detect situations where agency resources or good offices might be helpful to member institutions or programs. The commissions of all COPA member agencies should encourage such alertness.

4. To provide a forum for future examples and models of direct accreditation agency involvement, COPA should provide a regular column in its newsletter to be devoted to this topic.

Accreditation agencies have access to a tremendous range of resources for enhancing educational quality, often at little cost to members or to the public. Some agencies are making use of their resources regularly. But more can and must be done if accreditation is going to assume a leading role in the excellence movement currently taking shape in America. Now is the time to act.

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APPENDIX A
Categories and Examples of Direct Assistance

1. Provision of specific preaccreditation assistance by staff or representatives of agency.

   – An institution seeking candidate status (normally the first step in achieving full accreditation) requested and received assistance in planning and carrying out a self-study. Assistance was provided on a large range of topics by agency staff and site visitors (at no cost to the institution) and by consultants recommended by the agency (at the institution's expense). Over a five-year period, the institution gained full accreditation, and now offers what is generally regarded as an innovative and high quality religious education program.

   – An institution that was initiating a specialized program in manufacturing and construction technology requested a review of its newly developed curriculum by the professional accreditation agency, prior to seeking accreditation. At no cost to the institution, a nationally recognized curriculum expert who also served on the accreditation agency's commission provided a thorough review, making several recommendations about changes and additions. The expert advised that the institution seek accreditation for its program after the first class of students had graduated (in approximately two years). In the interim, he indicated his belief that the curriculum as modified would provide an excellent foundation for the new program.

   – A site visit team from a specialized accreditation agency documented major deficits in the curriculum of a surgical technology program that was seeking initial accreditation. The chairman of the team recommended that the applicant program withdraw its request for accreditation and seek assistance from the agency for improving the curriculum. This was done, a qualified consultant was recommended, and, following over a year of intensive effort, a second site visit team found the program to be in compliance with agency standards.

2. Assistance with targeted self-studies (after initial accreditation) to help meet specific institutional/program needs.

   – A small liberal arts institution was considering the option of offering a graduate program involving study abroad. When the institution requested a change in its accreditation status to exercise this option, agency staff requested that its administrators undertake a careful self-analysis to determine whether the new program fit within its mission, focusing especially on how the program would be governed (it was to be offered through another institution) and how quality would be assured. After undertaking this study, the institutional administrators decided not to offer the program. Agency staff believed this decision was wise, because they were extremely skeptical of the rationale for the new program.

   – A small religious college asked for assistance in conducting an intensive study of its curriculum. The accreditation agency staff responded by conducting a seminar for college faculty and staff on institutional planning and curriculum integration. Based on the model that was presented at this seminar, the college undertook a comprehensive curriculum redesign, which was integrated into a thorough analysis of institutional goals and mission. The result, in the view of agency staff, was a much improved institution that was well situated to provide a high quality educational experience.

   – A state board of higher education asked a regional accreditation association to evaluate the board's policies, procedures, and responsiveness to state educational needs at the same time evaluations were going on within several of the state's major institutions. A committee composed of four highly-respected educators from other states in the region spent five days visiting selected institutions and interviewing members and staff of the state board. These fact-finding efforts gave rise to a report that identified several major problems with respect to the funding and governance of higher education in the state. The team members delivered this report to the state board in person, along with recommendations intended to help develop permanent solutions to the problems they had perceived. As a result of these recommendations, efforts were undertaken to correct several potentially damaging situations. Observers credit the accreditation actions with making a valuable contribution to the overall quality of education in the state.

3. Assistance by members of accreditation site visit teams to or on behalf of visited institutions.

   (Facilities)

   – During a site visit by a team from an institutional accreditation agency, a team member discovered a serious safety hazard in the dormitory where the team was being quartered. The problem was brought to the attention of the institution's president, who immediately ordered the premises to be evacuated and began corrective action. The incident reporter in this case believed that a disaster may have been averted.

   (Equipment)

   – A representative of a major telephone company was asked by a regional association to serve on a site visit team for a public occupational school. During the visit, the telephone company representative noticed that an electronics technology program lacked an important piece of test equipment. He initiated discussions with the program administrator, and, as a result, his company donated the needed piece of equipment.

(Instruction)

– During a site visit by a specialized accreditation agency team, one of the team members described to faculty of the host program a system she had developed to obtain reliable student evaluations of course content and instructional quality. Program administrators and faculty tried out a variant of her system on a small scale and then adopted it throughout their entire program. They have noted several specific improvements in teaching performance as a result.

(Curriculum)

– A site visit team from an accreditation agency in the allied health area described and demonstrated a new curriculum module involving the use of microcomputers to conduct certain clinical laboratory procedures. The staff of the host program studied the new curriculum module and enthusiastically adopted it; they believe the capabilities of their graduates have been considerably enhanced as a result.

4. Assistance by staff of visited institution or other site visitors to members of accreditation site visit team.

– In casual discussions among the members of a regional accreditation agency site visit team, one individual who was extremely knowledgeable about computers discussed with another individual the desirable features of a particular IBM mainframe computer. As a result of these discussions, the second individual was able to advise his own institution to purchase a used model of this computer when it became available as surplus from a state agency. The purchase allowed the institution to increase its computing capacity by 30% with a very modest investment.

– While serving on a site visit team for a regional accreditation agency, the Dean of Academic Affairs for a small junior college noted a unique system for recording and cataloguing the academic credentials of faculty at the school undergoing reaccreditation. The Dean instituted a similar system at her school immediately upon her return; she estimates the change has resulted in a 15% savings in the amount of time required for academic file maintenance.

5. Provision of specific postaccreditation assistance by staff or representatives of agency.

(Governance)

– A public community college was having well-publicized problems between its administration and its governing board. Noting these problems, the regional agency sent in a special team to investigate the facts and report back to the commission (the agency's decision-making body). The team's report was very critical of politically motivated interference by several members of the governing board. The accreditation commission took no immediate action, but it sent a copy of the team report back to the institution's president. The report subsequently found its way into the media. The outcome was a special recall election that resulted in the ouster of several governing board members. Later, the educational environment at the college returned to normal, with students being the beneficiaries.

(Fiscal Stability)

– A site visit report noted growing financial problems at a small liberal arts college. Regional accreditation agency staff were asked by college administrators for assistance. An individual was recommended who had in the past helped several other schools come back from the brink of financial collapse. The individual was engaged as a consultant to the institution; he succeeded in creating a survival plan that involved closing down several high-cost programs and tapping several new sources of revenue. As a result, the college is now relatively healthy and offers a unique educational program that is nationally respected.

(Faculty)

– An accredited health professions school was found to have insufficient teaching faculty assigned to oversee off-site clinical training. The specialized accreditation agency requested that this situation be corrected within a one-year period, upon threat of loss of accreditation. As a result, three new and well-qualified faculty members were hired and assigned to various clinical training sites. The de-facto probation was subsequently removed.

(Curriculum)

– The curriculum of a graduate program in library science was found to be out of date by a site visit team from a specialized accreditation agency. A subcommittee of the accreditation commission met over time with program administrators to suggest the addition of information sciences courses (especially the use of computers). The program was then required to submit periodic written reports on its success in implementing the suggested additions; only when a fully up-to-date curriculum was in place was the reporting requirement dropped. Agency staff believe this strategy is an effective one and are using it more frequently.

(Instruction)

– The medical technology program staff at a major university was having difficulty in ensuring that members of its clinical teaching staff in the university hospital met the continuing medical education requirements of the professional accreditation agency. The program staff interpreted the accreditation agency requirement to mean that the clinical faculty had to attend courses offered outside the university or hospital. At a self-study workshop, the program director raised this problem for discussion. One of the workshop facilitators suggested that the requirements might be met by having the university program faculty offer continuing education pro-

grams for the clinical faculty. This approach was tried with considerable success; to date, three highly-rated one-day sessions have been offered, and more are planned. Clinical faculty from other programs and other schools in the city have requested and have been given invitations to participate.

6. Facilitation of general professional and institutional development among member programs and institutions.

   – A specialized accreditation agency purposefully selects as site visitors nationally recognized scholars in the professional field in which accreditation is conducted. During the site visits made by these scholars, much information is shared regarding their theories/research/opinion that has helped to break down some of the insularity of the field. Agency staff report many indirect educational benefits of these expanded opportunities for professional communication.

   – A regional accreditation agency has conducted a series of professional development seminars on strategic planning and evaluation. Representatives of over 100 institutions that are accredited by this agency have attended these seminars. As a result, many colleges have improved their facility and curriculum planning and their use of data from graduate surveys. Several colleges in particular have made especially good use of the opportunity, producing exemplary planning and evaluation systems. Agency staff feel that many students have benefitted as a result.

   – A specialized agency solicited foundation funds (over $1.25 million) to do research into the characteristics of effective practitioners in the field. After the research was completed and reviewed, a checklist was developed to evaluate individual graduate students as to their potential for success in professional practice. Students with specific shortcomings can now be identified before they enter the field, and their shortcomings can be addressed through remedial instruction. The result is improved professional performance; students also appreciate the opportunity to verify their skills before they leave school.

APPENDIX B — CASE STUDIES

A CASE STUDY OF DIRECT ACCREDITATION AGENCY INVOLVEMENT IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY: THE SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS AND S. D. BISHOP STATE JUNIOR COLLEGE, MOBILE, ALABAMA

3 August 1985

BACKGROUND

Since 1967, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) has provided a program of direct assistance to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCs) in its region, which covers the 11 Southeastern states. Funded originally by grants exceeding $1.2 million from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the program of direct assistance to HBCs is now entering its third year of funding by the Ford Foundation. Initially, the HBC assistance program was aimed at helping the 77 historically black institutions in the SACS region to obtain candidacy status and then full membership in the Southern Association. As this goal was achieved, subsequent funding was sought to provide continuing help in allowing accredited HBCs to upgrade and refine their educational programs and resources. Especially targeted for aid during the Ford Foundation project were the 38 HBCs undergoing reaccreditation self-studies and site visits during the 1983-1985 time interval, 25 of which had recently appointed new presidents and several of which were experiencing difficulty in maintaining compliance with SACS standards.

The SACS assistance program for HBCs has four major components: (1) special staff visits to the institution prior to scheduled self-studies, aimed at helping to initiate a productive self evaluation process; (2) on-site consultant services provided before and/or after the self-study by recognized experts in various topics; (3) an orientation program for newly-appointed presidents; and (4) an annual conference during which seminars and workshops are provided on subjects of general relevance to all HBCs that are SACS members.

The following case study documents the involvement of one HBC in the SACS assistance program. It is intended to illustrate the benefits that can accrue when an accreditation agency decides not only to set and evaluate quality standards but also to provide direct assistance to member institutions in meeting and exceeding those standards.

The author gratefully acknowledges the cooperation of Drs. Joffre Whisenton and Harold Wade of the Southern Association Commission on Colleges and Dr. Yvonne Kennedy, President of S. D. Bishop State Junior College, in the preparation of this study.

Introduction to Bishop State Junior College

The College opened in 1927 as Alabama State College Branch, offering summer extension courses mainly for teachers residing in the Mobile area. In 1936, a full 12-month schedule was initiated, with classes being offered in a wing of a former Mobile medical college. Not until 1941 did the college move to its present site, on an 11-acre plot adjoining downtown Mobile (351 North Broad Street). In 1963, the school's name was changed to Alabama State College-Mobile Center. Independence came in 1965, when the Alabama legislature awarded state junior college status and a new name: Mobile State Junior College. At this time, the college had one permanent structure and an enrollment of less than 500 students. The present name was officially adopted in September of 1971 in honor of the school's long-time President, Dr. S. D. Bishop. Dr. Bishop died in 1981; he was replaced by Dr. Yvonne Kennedy, a college alumna who also serves as a reserve member of the Alabama legislature.

As only the second permanently-appointed President of S. D. Bishop State Junior College, Dr. Kennedy administers a faculty of 53 principally full-time members, 93% of whom hold at least the Master's degree. Enrollment currently stands at 1,629 students, of whom 1,134 are full-time and 495 are part-time; evening classes account for 245 of the part-time enrollments. The student body is 80% black, 2% other minorities, and 18% white. Seven out of every eight students receive some form of financial aid. The size and composition of the student body has changed little over the past few years. Both transfer-oriented and occupational programs are offered; the College awards the Associate degrees in Science, Arts, and Applied Science as well as certificates in several areas. Facilities include a central administrative/classroom building, a library, a music/physical education building, a former elementary school that now houses offices and a cafeteria, and separate structures for the nursing and mortuary science programs. Construction is scheduled to begin shortly on a new $3 million Student Life Conference Complex.

The annual College budget of approximately $4.6 million comes primarily from the state (48%) and federal governments (18%), including student financial aid and grants from the Title III program; student fees (15%), private gifts (14%), and other sources (5%) provide the remainder of the school's revenues.

The College is governed by the Alabama State Board of Education, which is composed of eight elected members representing different regions of the state, and a Chancellor, who is the chief executive officer for postsecondary education and administrator of the Alabama Postsecondary Education Department. The Department serves as the primary body for everyday oversight of all state junior colleges, including S. D. Bishop.

Bishop State Junior College and the Southern Association

Southern Association involvement with Bishop State Junior College dates back to 1970, when the College originally applied for candidate status. During 1971 and 1972, SACS staff and consultants provided considerable assistance in helping school administrators plan and carry out a self-study that illustrated the College's initial compliance with SACS standards. Full accreditation was granted in 1974 and reaffirmed following a five-year review in 1979. Some of the legacies of the original SACS recommendations include: a Division of Research and Development, to carry out continuing studies in support of institutional advancement; a system of four academic divisions to replace the previous autonomous departments, resulting in greater coordination of the curriculum across subject areas and disciplines; a Student Personnel Services Office; resident medical services for students; and the origination of a security system for student records.

Preparation for the 1984 reaccreditation began in the spring of 1982, with a visit from Dr. Joffre Whisenton, a staff member of the SACS Commission on Colleges and Co-director of the Ford-funded program for HBCs. His visit, conducted at no cost to the College, set the stage for a major self-study effort. He met with the administrative staff to explain the ground-rules, pointing out

that SACS would expect full faculty involvement (including separate divisional self-studies) and intensive efforts to specify and document the College's attainment of student learning outcomes in all curriculum areas. Shortly after this meeting, a Director and a set of steering committees were appointed to organize and manage the self-study process.

SACS then provided additional assistance through a visit by Dr. Whisenton and two expert consultants: Dr. Wesley McClure, Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Dr. Herman Reese, Director of Financial Aid at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Through a half-day kick-off meeting with all administrators and faculty, they provided both general information about the purposes and processes of meaningful self-study and specific information about a variety of topics, such as how to conduct student and faculty surveys to provide an objective information base. At this time, Dr. Whisenton and the consultants also shared self-study documents from other colleges illustrating some of their points and providing models that the Bishop self-study Director could use in planning her own activities.

SACS then recommended that another expert consultant be brought in to review and critique the preliminary self-study and draft report. This was accomplished when Dr. Joe L. Boyer, President of Mississippi Valley State University, visited in June of 1983. Dr. Boyer's critique helped improve both the content and organization of the self-study report, readying it to serve as a basis for (1) the SACS peer review and (2) a continuing series of organizational and procedural changes aimed at improving educational quality at Bishop.

The nine-person site-visit team, headed by Dr. Robert Green, President of J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College in Richmond, Virginia, carried out its peer review in accordance with normal SACS procedures on 6-9 May of 1984. But SACS assistance did not end at that point! Again acting through the resources provided by its Ford Foundation grant, SACS appointed two consultants (Dr. Nebraska Mays, Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs for the University of Tennessee System, and Dr. Wilburn Fouche, Business Manager at Mississippi Valley State University) to visit in the summer of 1984. Their purpose was to assist Bishop administrators in understanding and beginning to act on the recommendations and suggestions of the site-visit team. This full-day visit is widely credited with establishing a high level of motivation such that by September of 1984 Bishop administrators were able to submit a follow-up report to SACS detailing action on **all** of the Visiting Committee's 32 recommendations and 22 suggestions.

In December of 1984, the SACS Commission on Colleges voted to extend the accreditation of S. D. Bishop State Junior College until 1994. But that vote merely signaled a new period of enhanced educational effectiveness that had already begun at the College, which was started and maintained in part as a result of the direct assistance provided by SACS through its program for Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Major Benefits for Bishop State Junior College From the Reaccreditation Process

This case study was written early in 1985. As of that time, it was already clear that the extensive and careful self-study, peer review, and follow-up conducted at Bishop State in connection with the SACS reaccreditation process was having major benefits. Although it is too early to enumerate them completely, the following appear to be significant benefits that have resulted:

- A survey of the personnel skill needs of businesses in Mobile and its surrounding counties has been undertaken to help guide the development of future occupational training programs.
- The computerization of the College's fiscal, registration, and management information systems was initiated.
- The College catalogue was revised so that listed offerings would accurately reflect actual offerings.
- A continuing process of identifying student outcomes and evaluating their attainment was begun for all curriculum areas, including transfer-oriented as well as occupational preparation programs.
- Independent audits of the Business Office and Financial Aid Office were scheduled and will take place annually in the future.
- A major effort was initiated to provide a continuing program of professional faculty development; the first specific manifestation, a workshop on current economic, social, political, and technological trends that impact higher education, was held with good attendance on 1 March 1985. (The leader of this workshop reported that many of the ideas and materials included in the program were originally discussed at a SACS workshop she had attended the previous fall.)
- The process by which student financial aid checks are disbursed was streamlined.
- A faculty-staff Retention Task Force was established with the goals of studying the causes of dropouts at Bishop State and developing more effective remedial and academic advisement programs and other strategies to reduce the College dropout rate.
- The faculty evaluation program, including student evaluations, was improved, and arrangements were made to apply it consistently to all courses.
- An optional student health insurance program has been made available to all students.
- An intensive effort has been undertaken to build a permanent endowment fund for the College.
- An effort has been undertaken to balance faculty teaching loads (about 20 hours per week) with other nonteaching responsibilities, attempting to reduce overloads whenever possible.

Other Bishop State Involvement in the SACS HBC Program

As described in the introduction to this case study, the SACS program for Historically Black Colleges and Universities also included an annual workshop for administrators, faculty, and staff of HBCs that are members of the Southern Association. To date, two workshops have been held in Atlanta, one on 13-15 February 1983 and one on 18-20 November 1984. Topics on the agenda of the first workshop included: proposed revisions in the SACS accreditation standards; financial development for HBCs; improved linkages between external agencies and HBCs; curriculum improvement; and better planning, management, and evaluation of academic programs. Agenda topics at the second workshop included: improving linkages with foundations; improving business office procedures; developing new strategies for alumni affairs; and building endowments.

The newly-appointed Director of Alumni Affairs and Development attended the second workshop and reported gaining considerably from the occasion. As a direct result of her attendance, a decision was made to form a nonprofit foundation through the Greater Mobile Community Foundation as a vehicle for obtaining and processing external donations to support both current operations and the new endowment fund.

Conclusion

In the mid 1960's, the Southern Association decided to become more directly involved in providing assistance to one part of its constituency. The process by which it accomplished this involvement is one that could be adopted by any association that has identified special needs among its member institutions or programs:

- The need was well understood and the benefits of resolving it were clear.
- A funding source that had interests in the need area was identified and preliminary contacts were made (in this case, first with the Carnegie Corporation and then the Ford Foundation).
- Proposals were submitted to obtain the external funding necessary to augment meager association resources (in this case, approximately $100,000 per year).
- The external resources were used to provide services to help resolve the identified need.

This model is especially attractive in that many of the resources required to resolve particular problems are already available to accreditation agencies and only need to be marshalled — which can often be done at far less cost than would be the case if there was no agency involvement. And, in summing up the benefits for her school, Dr. Kennedy noted:

> We have a commitment to a "Program of Excellence" here at Bishop State. The assistance we have received from the Southern Association has helped us to make more progress in fulfilling that commitment than we could have made working alone. Although we still have some distance to travel, I think the key thing is to note the progress we have made. We know our goals and we know what we must do to attain them. The Bishop State family is extremely optimistic and enthusiastic about the future of our college and the contribution we will continue to make.

A CASE STUDY OF ACCREDITATION AGENCY INVOLVEMENT IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY: THE MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS AND RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

20 September 1985

BACKGROUND

In July of 1978, the Middle States Association (MSA) Commission on Higher Education reaffirmed the accreditation of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, until 1988. However, the Commission requested that Rutgers submit a new self evaluation report and undergo a peer review at its New Brunswick Campus by March of 1980. Such a revisit requirement is unusual for a large and prestigious public university; it reflected in part the Commission's concern about

> issues regarding the relationship between maintaining quality in undergraduate programs and the expansion of graduate study and research, (and) the further development of consensus among faculty and administration with respect to the differential missions, objectives, and strategies of teaching, research, and public service within the various components of the New Brunswick Campus. (Letter from Milton G. Bassin, Chairman of the Commission, to Edward J. Bloustein, President of the University, dated 6 July 1978)

In short, the University had been put on notice that MSA was concerned about possible conflicts between undergraduate and graduate programs and between administration and faculty at the New Brunswick Campus. It wanted the conflicts to be resolved as quickly as possible and intended to check within two years to see that they had been.

The following case study documents the events that led up to and followed MSA's notice to Rutgers, ending with an MSA follow-up visit in October of 1982 (rescheduled from the original March 1980 date). The changes that occurred between 1978 and 1982 constitute a remarkable record of achievement over a brief period. They illustrate the benefits that can accrue when an accreditation agency takes seriously its mission to promote educational quality, even within an institution which was chartered in 1766.

At the outset, it should be noted that the principal actors in this case study are administrators, faculty, and members of the governing board of Rutgers. MSA staff did spend considerable time with them in suggesting ways in which the university might respond meaningfully to the 1978 MSA site visit. But MSA involvement appears largely to have served as a motivator, and probably not the primary motivator at that. In this sense, the present case study differs from others in this set, which have attempted to provide models of direct accreditation agency involvement in enhancing educational quality.

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Dr. Robert Kirkwood, Executive Director of the MSA Commission on Higher Education; Dr. Edward Bloustein, Rutgers President; Dr. Evelyn Wilson, Associate Vice President for Program Development and Budgeting; Dr. Nancy Winterbauer, Assistant Vice President for Academic Planning and Program Development; Dr. Kenneth Wheeler, Provost, New Brunswick Campus; and Dr. Jean Parrish, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, New Brunswick Campus.

Introduction to Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey

Rutgers has a unique history as a colonial college, a land-grant institution, a college for women, and a comprehensive state university. It was chartered in 1766 as Queen's College, the eighth institution of higher learning to be founded in the American colonies. As a private liberal arts college in New Brunswick, it was renamed Rutgers College in 1825. It became the New Jersey land-grant college in 1864 and assumed university status in 1924. Legislative acts in 1945 and 1956 designated Rutgers, along with several associated colleges and schools, as the State University of New Jersey; some of these associated institutions (and their original founding dates) include: the College of Pharmacy (1892); the College of Engineering (1914); the New Jersey College for Women (now Douglass College) (1918); the College of Agriculture (now Cook College) (1921); the School of Education (1924); University College-New Brunswick (an evening college of liberal arts and professional studies) (1934); the University of Newark (now the Newark Campus) (1946); and the College of South Jersey (now the Camden Campus) (1950). Since the 1950's, Rutgers has continued to expand, especially in the area of graduate education, adding graduate schools in New Brunswick, Newark, and Camden; several professional schools (e.g., management, social work, psychology, fine arts and communications); and Livingston College — a new undergraduate college in New Brunswick emphasizing the urban environment.

The Rutgers-New Brunswick campus is actually five geographically-fractionated campuses, divided roughly as follows: (1) the College Avenue Campus, located in central New Brunswick, containing the original Rutgers College facilities, central administration buildings, and many of the professional schools; (2) the Busch Campus, located north of the central campus in Piscataway, containing relatively new math and science facilities (used by students of all colleges), student residences, and a golf course; (3) the Kilmer Campus, adjacent to the Busch Campus, containing Livingston College; (4) the Douglass Campus, south of the central campus; and (5) the Cook Campus, adjacent to the Douglass Campus.

Rutgers/New Brunswick's 25,000 undergraduates are enrolled in one of the four liberal arts colleges (Rutgers, Douglass, Livingston, or University) or professional schools (Cook College, arts, engineering, or pharmacy); these colleges have their own admissions and graduation requirements, each offering a distinctive academic program reflecting its own particular mission and philosophy (for example, Cook College emphasizes the relationship between people and the environment, stressing agricultural and environmental sciences). In all, undergraduate degrees are offered in almost 90 programs of study.

The 8,000 graduate students at Rutgers/New Brunswick are enrolled in six graduate schools and some 70 programs that cover the entire range of disciplines appropriate for a large public university.

In managing the logistical problems associated with approximately 33,000 students (almost two-thirds of whom live in campus residence facilities) and 2,000 faculty members, Rutgers/New Brunswick runs the second-largest public transportation system in the State of New

Jersey. Rutgers' annual budget approaching $300 million makes it one of the state's largest enterprises.

The Dilemma of Academic Organization at Rutgers

Historically, the principal orientation of Rutgers/New Brunswick has been toward providing a high quality undergraduate education. The model underlying this orientation has been the small autonomous liberal arts college, with enrollments not exceeding 3,000 to 4,000 students, most of whom resided on campus and interacted closely with a faculty whose values centered largely on teaching. Among the core colleges at Rutgers/-New Brunswick, Douglass College and, to a lesser extent, Rutgers College and Livingston College fit this model very closely. Until the time of the 1978 MSA reaccreditation, the academic organization of the New Brunswick Campus consisted of a loose-knit "federation", in which each undergraduate college had its own budget, dean, faculty, students, programs of study, and admission/graduation standards. This meant that many students experienced a strong sense of college identity and cohesiveness, along with opportunities to interact closely with a faculty dedicated to undergraduate instruction. Transfers between colleges, intercollege majors, scholarly faculty interaction, the hiring of new faculty, and, most importantly, graduate instruction occurred in accordance with complex and largely ad hoc arrangements established under the federation of undergraduate colleges.

But as Rutgers grew and assumed more of the responsibilities of a large public university, the problems associated with the federated academic organizational structure in New Brunswick became more serious. Between 1971 and 1974, under a newly arrived President, several committees met to review these problems and seek resolutions that would maintain the strengths of the federated college structure. In March of 1972, the position of Provost for the New Brunswick Campus was created; along with a redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of the divisional chairpersons, this change was intended to strengthen academic disciplines across all colleges and reduce barriers to inter-college enrollments. In 1974, after a period of sometimes intense campus debate, President Bloustein and the Board of Governors enacted a resolution calling for preservation of a refined but essentially still fragmented academic organization that preserved the budgetary and hiring responsibilities of the individual undergraduate college deans while establishing several mechanisms, centered in the Office of the Provost, designed to further strengthen academic disciplines, reduce intercollege barriers, and facilitiate graduate instruction. As part of this 1974 resolution, the revised federation was to be given four years to mature, following which it was to be comprehensively evaluated.

Into this awkward situation, characterized by (1) strong faculty, administrator, alumni, and student feelings for and against the federated system and (2) continuing controversy and debate, an MSA site visit team stepped in March of 1978.

Preparation for the 1978 MSA Reaccreditation Visit

Recognizing the fact that the issue of academic organization had not yet been resolved to the satisfaction of many on the New Brunswick campus, Rutgers administrators had requested that the focus of the 1978 MSA reaccreditation be limited to graduate education and to the goals and objectives of the undergraduate colleges. MSA approved this request. Rutgers staff subsequently prepared a rather perfunctory self-study document, which consisted primarily of a compilation of various data and committee reports addressing the then-current institutional goals, policies, and procedures regarding (1) undergraduate liberal arts education in relation to graduate education and research; (2) college versus discipline identification of the faculty; and (3) planning and budgeting responsibilities of the New Brunswick central administration versus those of the constituent colleges. This document gave little or no attention to the considerable differences of opinion that existed among various campus groups with respect to each of the above issues. It provided only a hint that the status quo represented an uneasy truce which major forces within the institution were even then gearing up to reevaluate. And it gave little specific guidance as to how or where MSA assistance might be welcomed, as part of the reaccreditation process.

From its perspective, MSA planned for and set up the Rutgers peer review according to standard operating procedures. The site visit team that was constituted contained numerous nationally recognized experts who were associated with some of America's preeminent public universities, several of which were located outside the MSA region. It was chaired by a distinguished professor who had formerly served as president of a campus of the State University of New York. Although the MSA staff could see that the visit would be difficult, due to the topics Rutgers had chosen to target for the reaccreditation, there was no hint of trouble.

The MSA Site Visit: A Stimulus for Action

Despite the fact that their charge was to overlook academic structure, it was inevitable that the MSA site visitors would soon find themselves embroiled in the campus-wide debate regarding the pros and cons of Rutgers' federated organization; the issues of organization were closely intertwined with those of (1) institutional mission and goals, (2) graduate education, and 3) the general improvement of educational quality at Rutgers. It was not inevitable that the team would "take sides" in the debate; that it appeared to do so, perhaps inadvertently, intensified the scope and depth of the university's response, eventually resulting in: (1) a new statement of institutional goals and priorities that is widely acknowledged as a major influence throughout the campus and the state; (2) a revised academic structure in New Brunswick that permits highly personalized undergraduate teaching to coexist with research and service at the graduate level; and (3) a high level of consensus among governing board members, administrators, faculty, students, and alumni of all persuasions that appropriate directions have been set and the university is moving along toward them.

Without providing a detailed documentary, it is instructive to examine the actions and words of the MSA site visit team that preceded these outcomes.

Summary of the Process

All parties who were interviewed for this case study agreed that the self-study materials prepared in advance of the MSA site visit were incomplete, revealing little about the nature of the problems facing the New Brunswick campus or the history of on-going steps to resolve them. Thus, it was necessary for the team to gather considerable information on their own. The chairman of the site visit team reported that "many of our observations and comments are based less on the prepared materials than on interviews and materials made available during the visit." MSA team members apparently spent considerable time interviewing individuals who supported the then-prevailing academic structure. Indeed, there was no shortage of such individuals, especially among the administrators and faculty of the undergraduate liberal arts colleges; yet equally numerous proponents of expanding roles for the university — and new organizational structures to facilitate those roles — either failed to come forward or were not sought out.

The chairman's report that "the total experience has been less fulfilling and less valuable to Rutgers University than might have been anticipated or desired" seems to have accurately captured the sentiments of both team members and university administrators at the time.

Summary of the Products

The MSA visiting team report to Rutgers and the MSA Commission on Higher Education correctly identified the lack of consensus that existed at Rutgers regarding appropriate academic missions and priorities, organizational patterns, and decision-making responsibilities. For example, the report made reference to "a ship underway but helmless and rudderless, with the officers off the bridge and tinkering with the machinery in the engine room."

Less understandably, the team came out firmly on the side of those at Rutgers who felt that the university's traditional emphasis on undergraduate liberal arts education should be preserved — if necessary by sacrificing stated aspirations for expanded excellence in graduate study and research. Some of the following quotations indicate the nature of the visiting team report in this regard:

- "On the principle of building on strength, it would appear that Rutgers might define its role in Graduate Education by developing selectively graduate programs founded upon excellence in Undergraduate Education, and on established links to the State and the Region, such as those in agriculture and the environment, the professional schools in applied sciences, and the research institutes and bureaus.

- At the risk of abrading local sensibilities by presumptuous advice, the visitors harped on the theme that instead of a late blooming Ann Arbor or Amherst on the Raritan, the institution should be uniquely and proudly Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

- The university may wish to examine its options for expanding, maintaining, or contracting its panoply of Ph.D. offerings; experience elsewhere suggests that undergraduate and graduate study can be excellent in degree programs stopping short of the doctorate.

- There would seem to be a special opportunity at Rutgers for further differentiation of mission and function among the federated (undergraduate) colleges, and for energetic planning for innovation and adaptation based more on the needs of current and immediately prospective students than upon disciplinary, departmental, and institutional aspirations."

The Aftermath of the MSA Site Visit: Picking Up the Gauntlet

In announcing its decision to reaccredit Rutgers, the MSA Commission on Higher Education failed to refer to the report of its site visit team. But no one at the university took lightly the Commission's imposition of a required report and revisit in two years. As if stung by a perceived rebuke, administrators in both the Central Administration and the New Brunswick campus acted quickly to resolve many of the problems noted by the visitors, but **not** in accord with the suggestions in the team report.

While it is not possible to document here all of the accomplishments of the postvisit period, some of the major ones are listed below. In summing up these efforts for a new MSA site visit team in 1982, university administrators noted that "together, the report represents a retrospective of what has certainly been one of the most extensive periods of self-study ever undertaken at Rutgers."

- A formal, seven-step consultative process, composed of in-depth reviews and opportunities for sign-off by representatives of faculty, campus administrators, the University Senate, the President, a committee of the Board of Governors, and the full Board was established, widely published, and applied to all of the following changes in policy.

- An ad hoc Board of Governors committee was established to formulate a consensus statement of the mission, goals, and objectives for Rutgers in the 1980's; utilizing the services of expert consultants, public hearings, and the consultative process mentioned above, this committee produced a statement on the future of the university that stressed the need for Rutgers to seek and attain world-class excellence in undergraduate education, graduate programs, research, **and** service to society and the State of New Jersey.

- A Task Force on University Policy and Future Directions in Graduate and Graduate Professional Education at Rutgers, composed of distinguished faculty members, was established to review all graduate programs and recommend which should be expanded as centers of excellence, maintained as programs appropriate for a major public university, or discontinued; after its initial report, this select task force spawned a Standing Committee on Graduate Education to carry out continuing internal reviews aimed at permanently enhancing the excellence of graduate programs at Rutgers.

- A University Committee on Public Service and Continuing Education was formed to catalogue public service programs and evaluate them with the purpose of reinforcing and expanding those found to align with university goals.

- A Select Committee on Academic Quality was empaneled to provide a permanent channel for obtaining policy guidance from distinguished faculty and staff regarding means for improving the quality of the university's teaching, research, and public service activities.

- A new Institutional Master Plan was established, including principles and goals for student access and enrollments, the role of Rutgers within New Jersey's system of higher education, and the probable fiscal, social, and technological context for the decade; it stressed the university's need to "draw its breath, to consolidate its strengths, and to build even greater quality into its programs."

- Efforts were undertaken to strengthen university ties to businesses and industries in the state, both for enhanced research partnerships and for promoting technological growth.

- A document describing ("demystifying") Rutgers' planning and budgeting process was prepared and circulated throughout the university community.

- In New Brunswick, after considering the recommendations of two select and representative committees, a major reorganization was undertaken and partially accomplished, including: (1) the unification of all disciplines into campus-wide departments; (2) the creation of unified Faculties of Arts and Sciences and of Professional Studies, replacing the individual collegiate faculties; (3) the physical relocation of most faculties into departmental facilities; (4) the creation of a Council of Deans, including the deans of the graduate school and professional schools, whose purpose is to coordinate the demands of undergraduate and graduate instruction; and (5) the publication of the campus' first consolidated catalogue since its founding in 1766.

When a special MSA "revisit" team reported on its findings in October of 1982, it noted that "though there seems to have been much opposition to reorganization in the past, it appears that since the decision has been made, most individuals on campus accept it as an accomplished fact and will work within the new arrangements to make it as successful as possible." The team was complimentary of both the process — citing the extensive ("we think it may have been excessive in some cases") degree of consultation — and products of Rutgers' self-evaluation and enhancement efforts since 1978. As this case study was being written in 1985, the 1982 team's words seemed even more true:

> (Rutgers) is well-administered; clear, if still somewhat tentative, in its collective vision of its new role and mission; hardened in the crucible of events surrounding reorganization and the change in mission, yet confident in its essential strength and future destiny. The faculty, even those who have opposed some recent policy decisions, appear to respect the administration and the trustees. They seem dedicated to overcoming past disagreements and to working cooperatively to improve the University. Everyone we met appeared determined that Rutgers will be a strong and better institution that can play a major role in the economic and social development of New Jersey in the decades ahead. We were impressed with the exciting spirit that pervades the University, and we are confident that the present administration, with the strong support of its faculty and its Board of Governors, has the vision, the motivation, the knowledge and the skills to bring Rutgers to a new level of achievement comparable to that which has characterized the great state universities of this nation.

Conclusion

In 1978, the Middle States Association Commission on Higher Education called for one of its major institutional members - Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey - to conduct a special self-study and undergo a two-year revisit in light of a critical report by a distinguished site visit team. Although the MSA Commission took little notice of the specific recommendations contained in the team report, it did indicate its serious concerns with the problem areas revealed therein.

Through a complex chain of events, including the influence of previous policy decisions, an especially motivated Board of Governors (one of whose members served at the time on the MSA Commission), a declining economy, a more active State Board of Higher Education, the fortuitous emergence of several especially skilled leaders among the administration and faculty of the university, and the urging of MSA senior staff members, Rutgers underwent a striking transformation. The institution that emerged is well on its way to becoming one of the nation's great public universities.

There can be no doubt that the actions of MSA's visiting team, senior staff, and Commission were highly influential in accelerating Rutgers' dramatic turnaround. The general principle underlying these actions — *to ensure that member institutions identify and seek to attain the highest qualities they are capable of achieving* — is one that is worthy of emulation by all accreditation agencies.

A CASE STUDY OF DIRECT ACCREDITATION AGENCY INVOLVEMENT IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY: THE WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES AND LONG BEACH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

7 October 1985

In the Summer of 1981, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) and two state agencies (the governing boards for community colleges in California and Hawaii) received a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) for a major three-year project. The goal of the project was to improve the evaluation and planning capabilities of all 112 community colleges in the two states (which constitute the WASC region). Numerous project activities were carried out over the following three years in attaining that goal, including the development of (1) plans for delineating the roles of state governance and nongovernmental accreditation agencies and coordinating their review of institutions, (2) learner outcome statements and a bank of outcome indicators and test items to promote more useful institutional assessment practices, (3) improved data and models for strategic planning by state agencies and institutions, and (4) techniques for linking strategic planning concepts more closely to the accreditation process. In particular, the FIPSE/WASC project employed consultants, commissioned and distributed working papers, collected and analyzed "futures" data, held workshops for both state agency and institutional staff members, developed handbooks, and evaluated results — all with the support of the FIPSE grant.

This case study documents the involvement of one WASC member institution — Long Beach Community College in Long Beach, California — in the strategic planning aspects of the FIPSE/WASC project. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Dr. Robert Swenson, now-retired Executive Director of the WASC community colleges commission; Dr. John McCuen, President; Ms. Marjorie Lewis, Acting Dean for Research and Development; Mr. Keith Roberts, Dean of Extended Instruction and Coordinator of Planning; and Dr. James Kossler, Vice President for Administrative Services of Long Beach Community College.

At the outset, it should be noted that much of the progress achieved by Long Beach Community College in strategic planning is due to the efforts of its own administrators and staff; but the FIPSE/WASC project was extremely helpful to college planners, providing both a conceptual framework and technical assistance in building on that framework.

An Introduction to Long Beach Community College

Long Beach Community College (LBCC) is one of California's oldest community colleges. It opened its doors in 1927 as part of the Long Beach Unified School District. The college first occupied what is now its central academic and administrative campus on Carson Street in 1935. In 1949, facilities on the Pacific Coast Highway were acquired, principally for vocational programs. LBCC was officially separated from the city school district as a result of state legislative action in 1970.

Today, the college provides more than 1700 courses through nine instructional divisions to a total enrollment of over 23,500 students, of whom slightly over 40% attend full time. The student body is changing rapidly, having gone from less than 20% minority in 1970 to over 40% now, with significant increases in female, full-time, and day program enrollments occurring over the same period. Total full-time certificated staff numbered 328 during the 1983-84 school year, along with 600 part-time instructors.

LBCC is governed by a Board of Trustees, whose five members are elected quadrennially by the citizens of the college district. Prior to the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, funding for the college came from a mixture of local, state, and federal sources, with local taxes supplying about 45% of revenues. Today, almost 70% of the college's annual $40 million operating budget comes from State appropriations — a situation that has severely strained efforts by college administrators to plan rationally based on stable revenue projections.

Overview of the LBCC Strategic Planning Process

Prior to assuming his present position in 1981, LBCC President John McCuen served as Vice Chancellor for Planning and Development at the Los Angeles Community College District. He thus was predisposed to initiate a more functional planning process at LBCC immediately upon his arrival. Symptomatic of the need for such a process was a general sense among all parts of the college community that (1) they had little awareness of or participation in the planning and financing of LBCC operations and (2) external events rather than college officials were largely in control.

The new planning and budgeting process initiated early in 1982 took advantage of the fact that a WASC reaccreditation visit was to occur in 1984. Nine self-study committees (SSCs) were set up, one for each of the nine areas in the WASC accreditation standards (i.e., goals and objectives, educational programs, institutional staff, student services, community services, learning resources, physical resources, financial resources, and governance/administration). Special care was taken to ensure that committee membership was fully representative of the entire college community. In all, over 130 faculty, administrators, and students were selected initially; subsequently, SSC members elected their own chairpersons. To provide information and guidance to these committees, five environmental scan teams, composed of especially knowledgeable college faculty, were formed in the areas of demographics, employment, developments in postsecondary education, life-style and social change, and technology. Coordinating the activities of the SSCs and the scan teams was a planning/self-study coordinator and a Planning Council, composed of the coordinator, chairpersons of the nine SSCs, college vice presidents and area managers, and President.

Operating with the benefit of (1) "futures assumptions" prepared by the scan teams, (2) their own knowledge of college needs within their committee's designated focus area, and (3) the WASC standards, the SSC members prepared "appraisal items" that identified key concerns within their particular focus areas. For example, one futures assumption prepared at this time states:

> Due to the anticipated growth in the minority population of Long Beach, and based on the percent increases of LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students in the public schools, faculty members can expect increasing numbers of non-native English speakers to appear in college classrooms in the years ahead.

A related appraisal item from the SSC on Student Services noted the college's lack of standardized preentry testing program for all entering students to assist in their placement and counseling as well as in identifying educational needs for guiding decisions about needed course offerings. (Such an assessment program had existed up until the late sixties, but it was dropped as a result of policy decisions aimed at permitting more open access.)

After Planning Council coordination of the inputs from all nine SSCs, appraisal items went forward for formal review at a full-day retreat attended by members of the Board of Trustees, the Planning Council, and deans and department heads representing the major college stakeholders. From this review, which featured quantitative ratings obtained from all attendees, emerged a reduced set of priority items selected for inclusion in a comprehensive college plan. Those items selected for inclusion were returned to their originating SSCs for conversion into objectives and for the development of coordinated implementation plans specifying action responsibilities, time schedules, and accountability arrangements. For example, in the case of the above item regarding the lack of an adequate preentry screening mechanism, an objective calling for the development of a new student appraisal stysem was formulated, along with implementation responsibilities and a development schedule.

Throughout the entire initial cycles, the President constantly demonstrated his commitment to the process by providing administrative support to and meeting personally with the various teams and SSCs and expressing his appreciation for their efforts, which were documented semiannually through a planning newsletter that was widely distributed on the campus. He also served as an active member of the SSC on goals.

Assistance from the FIPSE/WASC Project

As they moved forward with the simultaneous design and operation of their new strategic planning system, the LBCC planning coordinator received several valuable forms of assistance from the FIPSE/WASC community college improvement project. The first major benefit was a series of project-sponsored workshops on the topic of strategic planning, at which expert consultants made presentations on topics including futures and needs assessment, achieving widespread participation within the college community, and setting priorities among competing objectives. A second benefit was the direct assistance provided by Jenifer Franz, a FIPSE/WASC project consultant who provided LBCC staff with both statewide data and techniques for deriving "futures" materials relevant to LBCC from those data. Thirdly, LBCC staff participated in a series of statewide workshops on the topic of strategic planning, talking to their counterparts in other colleges, learning about how others had addressed common problems and in the process creating an informal network whose members they could consult in the future. Finally, they had an opportunity to step back and look more objectively at their own evolving planning/budgeting system, identifying some of its strengths and weaknesses in a context conducive to building on the former and resolving the latter.

As if to demonstrate that strategic planning and accreditation can proceed together as part of a continuous process of institutional self-assessment and improvement, the materials prepared by LBCC in 1982 and 1983 through its planning/budgeting process were edited and supplied to WASC in 1984 in the form of an extensive and complete self-study document. Both the WASC site visitors and ACCJC commission members complimented the college staff on the thoroughness of their preparation and the depth of their consideration of needed changes. In fact, the accreditors did not make a single recommendation that had not already been called for in the LBCC self-study.

Refinements in the LBCC Planning/Budgeting System

But LBCC planners have not rested on their laurels. From the beginning of the development process, they knew that improvements would be needed to make their planning/budgeting system truly effective as a comprehensive mechanism for guiding educational improvement efforts. Speaking to one of the 1983 FIPSE/WASC project workshops, which they hosted, President McCuen, planning coordinator Keith Roberts, and Vice President for Administrative Services Jim Kossler noted the following problems:

- It was still difficult to link the appraisal items and priorities coming out of the planning process with the annual college budget; coordination was still lacking in many important respects, especially when planning objectives had budgetary implications; too often planning and budgeting were proceeding in isolation from one another, to the detriment of both.

- Senior managers were still not sufficiently involved in the process; too many immediate problems of major importance were not getting dealt with because they "fell between the cracks" in the jurisdictions of the various SSCs.

- It was difficult to provide adequate feedback to members of the SSCs regarding the fruits of their labors; consequently, it was difficult to keep all participants motivated and active over a prolonged period.

- Relationships between the SSCs and the other standing committees of the college were unclear.

- In a collective bargaining environment, such as the one that existed at LBCC, it was difficult to provide a mechanism for ongoing participation of the faculty and staff bargaining units; thus, agreements apparently reached with all major stakeholders during the planning/budgeting process were still subject to renegotiation (and sometimes rejection) during collective bargaining.

To help resolve some of these problems, LBCC has undertaken several recent refinements in its planning/budgeting process. Most important, perhaps, is a

revision aimed at ensuring that planning priorities drive budget priorities. As it currently operates, the process makes heavy use of four Area Planning/Budget (APB) teams, one each for Academic Affairs, Administrative Services, Student Services, and Administration, headed by the three college vice presidents and the President, respectively. These teams meet frequently to consider budget projections, negotiate possible budget cuts, and consider the programmatic impact of various cut options. Armed with the results of their deliberations, team members receive the output from the SSCs and the Planning Council and prepare the consolidated set of strategic assumptions (short-term, consensus futures assumptions) to go forward for consideration at the President's Retreat. They then assume major responsibilities for ensuring that **all** selected action priorities which have budgetary implications are reflected in the tentative college budget prior to its consideration by the Board of Trustees. The members of the APBs appreciate the fact that their success in ensuring the budgetary consideration of planning priorities is crucial to the credibility and effectiveness of the college's strategic planning process.

Outcomes of the LBCC Planning/Budgeting Process

Although it is difficult to distinguish the outcomes of the LBCC planning/budgeting **process** from the outcomes of decisions flowing from it, an outside observer can note the high degrees of participation and consensus about objectives that have been achieved at LBCC. An accountability report prepared to summarize progress made in implementing the 1983-84 plan of action, which contained 49 action priorities, illustrates an impressive amount of progress. For example:

- a new statement of college purpose, which is more explicit and conducive to use in setting priorities, has been disseminated;
- a new hourly instructor evaluation process has been developed;
- standard criteria for the selection of part-time staff have been prepared and are in use;
- guidelines for ensuring the quality of community services offerings have been implemented;
- an assessment of the financial possibilities inherent in contract education has been completed; and
- a comprehensive Budget Preparation and Procedures Manual has been drafted and is undergoing final revisions.

As implied by the last item above, the planning/budgeting process at LBCC is on the verge of institutionalization — passing from a temporary to a permanent feature in the structure and operating procedures of the college. It is clear that the citizens of Long Beach will benefit as a result.

Conclusions

Using accreditation standards as the foundation, an impending reaccreditation site visit as a motivator, and the helpful services provided by a federally-funded accreditation agency project, LBCC has developed and implemented a model strategic planning system that is serving its constituents well.

From its perspective, WASC can point with pride to its efforts to (1) identify major problems facing its community college members and (2) work with state agencies in its region to obtain grant assistance (in this case, a federal grant) aimed at resolving those problems. WASC's actions in this case constitute a model worth emulating by all accreditation agencies.

A CASE STUDY OF DIRECT ACCREDITATION AGENCY INVOLVEMENT IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY: THE ASSOCIATION OF THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION MANAGEMENT (ITEM) AND THE WASHINGTON THEOLOGICAL UNION, WASHINGTON, DC

5 September 1985

Established in 1918 as the Conference of Theological Seminaries and Colleges, the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) has engaged in the accreditation of graduate theological education institutions since the late 1930's. ATS originally served primarily protestant denominations within the Christian religion. It broadened its membership in the mid-1960's to include Roman Catholic seminaries offering post-baccalaureate programs. Among its some 200 members, ATS currently counts over 40 Catholic seminaries, major university divinity schools, and the major theological education schools of both mainline and evangelical protestant denominations.

In its unique position as an organization serving schools of differing philosophical orientation, ATS has from its beginning attempted actively to promote the improvement of theological education. "Improvement" in this context has meant different things at different points in the organization's history, with interpretations differing as a function of the social context (e.g., ATS spearheaded efforts to integrate minorities and women into theological education), development in theological education (e.g., ATS fostered the emergence of a professional doctorate degree in various fields of ministry), and prevailing views of appropriate educational methods (e.g., ATS staff interest in the concept of competency-based education influenced modifications in both educational standards and in techniques of estimating the readiness of graduates for professional practice).

One of the most notable current efforts by ATS to improve the quality of theological education is the Warren H. Deem Institute for Theological Education Management (ITEM). ITEM is part of a comprehensive program designed for theological school administrators, many of whom have had little or no formal training for their jobs. Based heavily on strategic planning concepts, ITEM seeks to assist executive officers and their staffs in: (1) defining management goals; (2) clarifying their roles as managers and viewing institutional operations from a managerial perspective; (3) acquiring specific skills in resource utilization, motivation, communication, and staff development; and (4) integrating those skills with their own managerial styles and applying them in the context of their own institutions.

Funding for development of the ITEM curriculum was provided in 1981 by a major grant from The Lilly Endowment, Inc., which also underwrites a portion of the Institute's operation costs. Beginning in 1982, ITEM has conducted annual summer sessions and winter follow-up sessions for 30-35 selected theological school administrators who are formally sponsored by their home institutions. Costs currently run $2,300 per participant, which cover about 40% of total Institute expenses.

The three-week ITEM summer program is held at Arden House, the Columbia University conference center on the Hudson River 50 miles north of New York City. Formerly the estate of Governor Averill Harriman, Arden House offers an environment suitable for intensive learning; participants eat, sleep, and attend classes at the center. Faculty from Columbia University Graduate School of Business and Riverside Group, an independent consulting organization, utilize case studies, lectures, readings, and up-to-date business systems with small groups and individual participants in a program stressing team problem solving, hands-on learning, and personal reflection. Because of the great diversity of previous experience participants bring into the session, regular evaluations are carried out to ensure that all are attaining the Institute's desired learning goals. Special efforts are made to help participants plan for applying newly learned concepts to the particular problems they are facing in their own institutions.

Summer session participants reconvene for three days in December to discuss their managerial experiences; ITEM faculty and fellow participants critique actual long-range plans that have been developed and offer suggestions aimed at reinforcing further application of the strategic planning concepts taught earlier. An "alumnae" group also meets periodically for refresher seminars.

This case study explores the ITEM participation of two individuals affiliated with the Washington Theological Union in Washington, D.C. It is intended to illustrate the processes and benefits of the Institute as a possible model for other accreditation associations. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Drs. Leon Pacala, David Schuller, and William Baumgaertner of ATS and Drs. Vincent Cushing, President, James Coriden, Academic Dean, and Mary Holland, Director of Development of Washington Theological Union for their assistance in the preparation of the study.

Introduction to Washington Theological Union

Washington Theological Union (WTU) began as a unique theological education experiment in the wake of Vatican II — a major Roman Catholic conference called by Pope John XXIII. The thrust of church policy emanating from Vatican II was one of greater harmony and cooperation, both within and outside the church. Historically, most theological education had been accomplished in small seminaries supported by the individual Catholic communities (e.g., provinces of Catholic religious orders and dioceses of various geographic areas). After Vatican II, leaders of these communities were given freedom to consider more efficient arrangements for the educational preparation of priests and lay men and women.

In 1968, the leaders of six small Catholic theology schools in the Washington area, each of which represented a different religious community but all of which were engaged in preparing students for the ministry, began to meet. Out of their informal discussions emerged the concept of a single united school — one that could provide a common core of courses suitable for meeting most or all of their students' formal educational needs. In 1969 the Washington Theological Coalition was legally incorporated, and in 1970 it was authorized by the State of Maryland to award a masters degree in the field of theology. It was the first of many "union" type theological schools in the United States. Subsequently, in recognition of the growing stability and maturity of the merger, the Coalition became the WTU. With a spacious new campus in suburban Silver Spring and an annual budget of over $1.2 million, WTU is now one of the largest Roman Catholic schools of theology in the country. Current enrollments exceed 150 full-time and 100 part-time students. The faculty of over 20 full-time and 25 part-time teachers and scholars collectively represents over 40 different dioceses and religious orders of the Catholic church.

WTU is also a member of the Washington Theological Consortium, through which ten Protestant and Roman Catholic seminaries in the Washington area work together

to share their libraries and instructional programs without additional tuition charges to each other's students.

The Early Development of ITEM

The third President of WTU, Father Vincent Cushing assumed his position ten years ago. He came to the job with considerable experience as a theological scholar but very little as a school administrator — a lack he keenly felt soon after assuming the presidency. He was thus very interested when others within ATS began talking about the possibility of offering a structured training program in theological education management. Soon thereafter, he joined an ad hoc ATS committee whose mission was to set up such a program. The committee worked closely with representatives of the Lilly Endowment, Inc., of Indianapolis, Indiana — a relationship that grew naturally from Lilly's longstanding support of theological education in the United States. After developing the initial ITEM model based on similar summer programs for higher education administrators, e.g., the type conducted at Harvard University, the committee carefully searched for a source of training expertise that could put together a management development program geared to the special needs of seminary executives. They found this source at the Columbia University Graduate School of Management, specifically among faculty who were responsible for the school's MBA program for nonprofit organization executives. With the support of a five-year commitment of over $1 million from Lilly, ITEM began recruiting from its first class to be held in the summer of 1982. Father Cushing was nominated by WTU to be a member of that charter class.

Participation in ITEM

Although he had presided over WTU for almost seven years at the time, Father Cushing found the ITEM experience to be both enlightening and rewarding. One of the primary goals of the institute faculty was to develop a managerial **attitude** among the participants — a sense that managing was an acceptable (and not ungodly) pursuit which, if done well, could have tangible payoffs for their schools and churches. Father Cushing felt energized by this orientation, regaining a sense of mission that had become dulled by the trials of administering a school in an environment which neither recognized nor highly regarded administrative skills. For those students who could successfully acquire this attitude (and not all could), the ITEM case studies, lectures, and discussions produced both new learning and motivation to apply that learning. In Father Cushing's case, he:

- initiated the development of a long-range plan (LRP) for WTU that allowed him to identify major factors influencing the school's future and develop strategies for modifying those factors to enhance educational quality;
- began to appreciate some of the basic principles of endowment management that affect long-term financial health; and
- understood for the first time the importance of building an administrative **team** that could work together to attain jointly held educational goals.

Upon his return to WTU after his ITEM "retreat", Father Cushing immediately nominated the school's Director of Development, Dr. Mary Holland, to attend the following summer's program. For her part, Dr. Holland found of most value the recognition that seminaries do **not** generally value adroit management — with most administrators preferring to avoid consideration of financial, personnel, and facility matters in preference to more academic pursuits. Recognizing this resistance and its impact on development efforts helped her adapt to it in her job. She learned:

- new ways of acquiring and analyzing data about potential donors in preparation for effective fundraising campaigns;
- methods of identifying highest potential fundraising strategies to help set priorities in allocating time; and
- principles of endowment management designed to foster growth while still providing an acceptable payout to support current operations.

Outcomes of Participation in ITEM

From the perspective of an outside observer, the following are some of the longer-term benefits that have accrued to WTU as a result of its administrators' participation in ITEM:

- The school has a fairly sophisticated planning and budgeting process, including a schedule and a set of well-understood responsibilities, for creating annual spending plans that are in accord with institutional goals yet are realistic in terms of probable: (1) enrollments, (2) external support, (3) faculty and staff resources, and (4) changes in costs.
- The President is recognized as a leader who is secure in his role; he is aware of the managerial components of that role (e.g., seeking information, processing information, making decisions, evaluating, consulting, etc.) and carries them out comfortably.
- The administrative officers of WTU function as a team, characterized by close communications and active participation by all members.
- The institution as a whole has a good sense for its mission and its success in attaining that mission.

(Perhaps because the use of microcomputer-based planning aids was not introduced until the 1984 ITEM, WTU staff have yet to discover the benefits of such tools as electronic spreadsheets. This may be a fruitful topic for the ITEM alumnae group to take up in the future).

Other ATS Management Education Initiatives

Although they were not documented as part of this case study, it is worth noting that ATS also sponsors, with ongoing support from the Lilly Endowment, several annual educational programs for other theological school staff, including one for middle level school managers and another for development officers. The latter series, entitled "Financial Development in Theological Education," recently completed its third session. The three-day program featured plenary and small group workshops on such topics as IRS rulings, direct mail techniques, use of volunteers, and the biblical theology of development. Locations and programs for these sessions are determined by an advisory committee of development officers from ATS member institutions.

Conclusion

In his book **ATS Through Two Decades**, former ATS Executive Director Jesse Ziegler stresses the historical origins of the direct service orientation that today characterizes ATS. Built into the 1918 charter of its predecessor organization was the mission to identify and help meet the prevalent needs of member schools. Working closely with private foundations that have interests in theological education, ATS has for over three decades proactively diagnosed problems in the field and systematically structured problems to resolve them — often at little or no cost to its member institutions. Its work provides a model that is widely applicable to the quality enhancement efforts of other accreditation agencies. And in summing up the benefits of ATS membership for his school, Father Cushing said:

> "I love ATS. Its programs, like ITEM, respond to me. The staff take their responsibilities seriously. And they are careful to assess their successes and shortcomings. Several times we had to go back and adjust the ITEM Program based on feedback from the participants that it was missing the mark in some way. The whole organization is oriented to results."

A CASE STUDY OF DIRECT ACCREDITATION AGENCY INVOLVEMENT IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY: THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION CONSULTATION PROGRAM AND THE COUNSELING INTERNSHIP PROGRAM AT TOWSON STATE UNIVERSITY, TOWSON, MARYLAND

14 September 1985

Background

The American Psychological Association (APA) is a professional association of psychologists in the United States and throughout the world. In 1947, APA began to accredit psychology training programs to promote excellence in the field and to provide a service of quality assessment and enhancement for the general public. As part of its standard procedures for the accreditation of doctoral programs, APA encourages prospective applicants to obtain the services of an appropriately qualified psychologist who can visit the program before its application for accreditation is submitted. The consultant's role is threefold: (1) to advise the program's staff about the APA accreditation process and Criteria for Accreditation; (2) to identify aspects of the program that might not fully comply with the APA Criteria; and (3) to suggest changes that could help the program adhere more closely to the APA Criteria (and, presumably, improve program quality in the process).

The APA currently accredits doctoral training programs in the specialties of clinical, counseling, and school psychology. In addition, it accredits predoctoral internship programs that provide for supervised practice in these specialties.

This case study documents the process through which the Counseling Center at Towson State University in Towson, Maryland, sought and obtained APA accreditation for its predoctoral internship program in counseling psychology. It focuses on the APA-recommended consultation as a mechanism that both facilitated the accreditation process and enhanced program quality. It is intended to illustrate a general model of preaccreditation assistance that can be used by both institutional and programmatic accreditation agencies as a means of enhancing educational quality more directly than is typically the case.

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Mr. W. A. Kalkhof of the APA and the staff of Towson State University and its Counseling Center, especially: Mr. Charles Maloy, Associate Vice Presient of Student Services and Director of the Center; Dr. James Spivack, Associate Director and Director of Training; and Ms. Dorothy Siegel, Vice President of Student Services.

Introduction to Towson State University and Its Counseling Center

The University

Founded in 1866, Towson State University is located in a quiet suburb of Baltimore, Maryland. The university has recently undergone a major transition — from a small, traditional teachers college serving mainly nonresident students in the metropolitan Baltimore area to a comprehensive public university offering bachelor's degrees in over 35 disciplines and master's degrees in over 15. In the past 15 years, enrollments have doubled, with the student body currently numbering over 15,000, almost 14,000 of whom are undergraduates and almost 3,000 of whom live in campus residence facilities. Average College Board test scores for 1983 entering freshmen were 437 verbal and 474 math; approximately 60% of the student body receives some form of financial assistance. Long-range plans created as part of Maryland's overall program for meeting the state's higher education needs call for Towson State's enrollments to stabilize at approximately 9,000 FTE undergraduate students — a decline of about 1,500 FTEs from current levels that will require more restrictive admissions policies in the future, along with concerted efforts to retain the smaller student population that is admitted.

Towson State's faculty is composed of over 480 members, most of whom hold doctoral degrees in their fields; they are organized into six discipline-centered colleges and schools. The College of Continuing Education and the Graduate School are administrative divisions that cut across all disciplines. Governance is provided by a 15-member Board of Trustees appointed by the Governor of Maryland; this Board also oversees the five other state colleges and universities. The President of the University, who serves at the pleasure of the Board, is responsible for administering an annual budget that exceeds $56 million.

The 326-acre campus of the University features 31 academic and student residence structures surrounded by considerable open space on green rolling hills. Adjoining the campus is Sheppard-Pratt Psychiatric Hospital, one of the nation's premier mental health facilities.

The Counseling Center

Established in 1966 as an adjunct to the Health Center, the Towson State University Counseling Center has grown to become the primary source of mental health services for the university community. In 1983, the Center provided assistance with personal or social concerns and/or with career development to over 4,000 students. About a fourth of these clients were provided with individual counseling/therapy; another fourth were served indirectly through consulting with residence hall staff, faculty, or administrators; and about a half participated in group counseling sessions, workshops, or classes taught by Counseling Center staff. In the latter category, the largest population was served through two courses: (1) Personal Life and Career Planning, a two-unit undergraduate (General Studies) course; and (2) Introduction to the Helping Relationship, a three-unit upper division Psychology course. In addition, the Center operates a telephone tape system called COPE-LINE, which provides a wide array of information on topics such as life coping skills, sexuality, careers, health concerns, and consumer information. This service, which has averaged about 2,000 callers a month, will soon be expanded via WATS lines to cover the entire State of Maryland.

Towson State administrators view the Counseling Center as an integral part of the university's long-term development plan, stressing its role in improving the personal and social adjustment and career development of a student body that will be growing smaller and more select in the years ahead. Indeed, the President of the University has given Center staff significant responsibility in improving student retention. Along with this responsibility has come favorable treatment in the University's budget, with increases coming annually even in the face of cut-backs imposed in other areas.

The Counseling Center is located at the center of the university campus in a beautifully renovated Victorian house (named Glen Esk) which once served as the President's residence. The staff includes a Director and eight full-time professional counselors, three support staff, 15 paraprofessionals, and three predoctoral interns. The

training program provided for these interns is the primary focus of this case study.

The Internship Program

Beginning in 1974, Counseling Center administrators decided to augment the Center's service portfolio by adding a predoctoral internship program. Their decision was based on several perceived needs: to stimulate the professional staff through the addition of teaching functions; to add a constant source of new ideas; and to provide relatively low-cost personnel who could carry a wide range of responsibilities within the Center. It was especially notable in view of the fact that the University did not at the time (and still does not) offer a doctoral program in Counseling Psychology (in fact, the granting of doctoral degrees by public institutions in Maryland is restricted to the campuses of the University of Maryland and Morgan State University). This meant that interns had to be recruited from external doctoral programs, after completion of their academic course work and a supervised practicum.

Initially supporting one intern, the Center presently supports three and is planning for the addition of a fourth. Internships last for one calendar year and currently pay $10,000 (a figure that will increase to $11,500 next year). Interns progress through an individually-tailored program designed to fit their own interests and professional development plans. However, after a one-month orientation, all programs contain the following components:

- Clinical Services
  - Individual counseling, with a caseload of approximately ten clients per week
  - Routine intake interviews and assessments
  - Emergency duties as part of a crisis team
  - Leadership of groups and workshops on such topics as adjustment for returning students, stress and time management, and eating disorders
- Career Services
  - Teaching sections of the Personal Life and Career Planning course for undergraduates
  - Group workshops on career development topics
- Outreach, Consultation, and Oversight of Paraprofessionals
  - Orientation presentations to incoming freshmen
  - Teaching, supervising, and mentoring paraprofessionals
  - Leadership of special seminars (e.g., Alcohol Education)
- Professional Training
  - Clinical supervision, individually and as a group
  - Inservice within the Psychiatric Mental Health Service
  - Professional development seminars, including weekly meetings with psychiatric staff at the Sheppard-Pratt Hospital
  - Research and evaluation

In total, interns are expected to devote a full 40-hour week to the above activities, working under the supervision of the Counseling Center's Training Director and professional staff. As of 1985, 20 interns had completed the Towson State program, with most going on to employment in university or mental health center settings.

Motivation for Seeking APA Accreditation

Prior to the accreditation of the Towson State University Counseling Internship Program, the APA had never accredited such a program in an institution that did not offer the doctorate. Yet, from the time they established the intern program, staff of the Towson Counseling Center planned eventually to seek APA accreditation. They felt that accreditation would provide external validation for what they perceived to be an excellent program. They believed that this validation would provide wider recognition both outside and within the University, which could, in turn, assist in the annual competitions for recruiting the best interns (especially those from APA-accredited training programs) and obtaining funds from the University. Finally, they saw accreditation as a natural extension of their own desire to increase their professional expertise through continuing self-assessment and self-improvement.

From the University's perspective, neither the Vice President for Student Services, to whom the Center Director reports, nor the President questioned the decision to seek professional accreditation. Indeed, they welcomed it as an indicator of the professional dedication of the Center staff. Funds to support the process were readily granted from the President's discretionary funds.

The APA Consultation Process

As soon as the decision was made to seek accreditation, the Director of Training, who took charge of the process, started to plan for the use of a preaccreditation consultant. He saw the consultation as an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the APA's policies and procedures, especially its Criteria for Accreditation, while providing a "dry-run" site visit that could improve his staff's preparation for the actual APA peer review. For its part, the APA provided a list of possible consultants who were felt to be highly knowledgeable about the organization's practices in accrediting predoctoral counseling internship programs. Based on his own knowledge of persons in the field, the Training Director requested consultative assistance from a nationally-recognized counseling psychologist who headed the training program at the University of Missouri-Columbia. In carrying out her role as preaccreditation consultant, according to procedures recommended by the APA, this individual:

- read a preliminary version of the Counseling Center's self-study and application for APA accreditation;
- participated in a two-day site visit, organized and carried out in all respects similarly to a full-scale APA peer review, during which she met with administrators, staff, and participants in the Towson State internship program;

- discussed her observations regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and the extent to which it seemed to meet or exceed the APA's specific Accreditation Criteria; and

- prepared a written report, similar to a peer review report, which summarized her observations, findings, and recommendations for review and reaction by the Counseling Center staff.

Everyone at Towson State felt that the preaccreditation consultation process went well and was beneficial to the internship program. The consultant identified several problems that needed attention; but, in general, she reinforced the staff's view that their program was a high quality one which was ready to seek accreditation. As a result of the recommendations made at this stage, several changes occurred in the internship program:

- A formal Training Committee, composed of the Director of Training, a member of the professional psychology staff, a member of the non-psychology staff, and an intern, was constituted to monitor the program on an ongoing basis, taking over from the Director the sole responsibility for assessing and improving program quality.

- Plans were made, and approved by the University administration, to more rapidly increase the intern stipends.

- A seminar on ethical issues in counseling was moved from the second to the first semester of the internship program, to ensure that interns had adequately mastered its content before they began providing services to clients.

- Several aspects of program content were changed; in particular, the planning and conduct of an annual campus-wide alcohol education program, which had been a major intern responsibility, was transferred to the Office of the Vice President for Student Services.

- Plans were made to recruit even more widely than before for interns from top-quality doctoral programs outside of the immediate vicinity; special efforts were added to seek minority group members.

- More attention was devoted to developing research opportunities for interns, and to increasing the time spent by interns in taking advantage of those opportunities.

Perhaps the most salutary outcome of the consultation from the perspective of Counseling Center staff was the extent to which it prepared them for the actual accreditation site visit that came four months later. Their confidence buoyed by the consultant's positive report, which they had forwarded to the APA, Center staff received the APA representatives with little anxiety. In turn, this set the stage for a productive interaction in which potential solutions to several other minor problem areas were discussed and initiated. Specifically, the APA site visitors were responsible for the following enhancements:

- The goals and processes of the psychiatric seminars, conducted weekly in conjunction with staff at the Sheppard-Pratt Hospital, were reexamined and clarified for all involved parties. Interns report that the education value of these seminars had been considerably increased as a result.

- The required components of the training program have been stated more firmly, with less inferred latitude for options on the part of interns. This strengthened framework has allowed potential participants to assess the strengths of the program more accurately in judging its appropriateness for their own career goals.

- Record retention policies were studied and revised to bring them more closely into alignment with APA Standards for Providers.

On 11 February 1985, acting on the recommendation of its site visit team and the consultant who had preceded the team, APA's Committee on Accreditation granted full accreditation to the Towson State University Counseling Center internship program.

The benefits of this accreditation are already beginning to accrue. In contrast to past years, when several top choices had opted for APA-approved internships, the three top choices for next year's class of interns immediately accepted their bids to enter the program. Moreover, they will be joined by a fourth intern who is planning to volunteer her services so she can attend an accredited internship program that is close to her home. And the attitude of the whole staff seems to be improved by their pride in being associated with the only APA accredited counseling internship which is located in an institution lacking a doctoral degree program. In the words of one staff member, "Our hat sizes have about doubled since we got the word."

Conclusion

The APA's consultation process clearly helps prospective member programs assess and improve their quality, over and above the enhancement typical of the self-study and peer review process. The APA has thus provided a valuable adjunct to traditional accreditation practice — one that costs very little in relation to the benefits it offers. Every program seeking accreditation is encouraged to use the consultation process, and most do so. In considering his own experiences, the Training Director at the Towson State University Counseling Center noted:

> "Helping programs get ready for accreditation and then having to judge them is a difficult position for an agency to be in. Some just can't do it. But by encouraging the use of preaccreditation consultants, the APA can resolve this difficult role conflict. It worked beautifully in our case, possibly because of the preparations the whole staff made for the consultant's visit and possibly because we were so fortunate in getting the right person for the job. We treated her visit as the real thing. We wanted to do everything right the first time."